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**Service-Learning in Egypt: Effects of Demographics, Course Features, and Community Engagement on Civic and Developmental Outcomes for University Students**  
**Apprentissage par le service communautaire en Égypte : Les effets de la démographie, les composantes des cours, et l'engagement de la communauté dans les résultats civiques et liés au développement pour les étudiants universitaires**

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**Abstract**

Although service-learning is spreading in various geographic locations across the globe, the majority of extant literature is based in the U.S. Additionally, past research focused largely on investigating student outcomes through this pedagogy with little attention to exploring the impact of variations among service-learning courses and students. This study addressed these gaps by examining how individual differences among students, course features, and overall community engagement may relate to civic and developmental outcomes for college students through service-learning. Sixty-one students at a private university in Egypt completed survey questionnaires. Students' demographics and course composites predicted students' reports of enhanced community awareness. The overall community engagement composite contributed to students' reported outcomes of both enhanced community awareness and interpersonal effectiveness skills. The study suggests lines of research for scholars committed to advancing rigorous engaged scholarship and discusses implications for practitioners seeking to deepen service-learning outcomes.

**Résumé**

Quoique l'apprentissage par le service communautaire se répande un peu partout dans plusieurs régions à travers le monde, la majorité de la littérature académique actuelle est basée aux États-Unis. En outre, les recherches antérieures ont davantage concentré leurs enquêtes sur les résultats des étudiants obtenus à partir de cette pédagogie, avec très peu d'attention sur l'impact des variations parmi les cours d'apprentissage par le service communautaire et les étudiants. Cette étude entend combler ces lacunes en examinant comment les différences individuelles parmi les étudiants, les caractéristiques des cours, et l'engagement général dans la communauté peuvent être liées aux résultats d'ordre civique et liés au développement pour les étudiants grâce à l'apprentissage par le service communautaire. Soixante-et-un étudiants d'une université privée en Égypte ont complété les questionnaires d'enquête. Les données démographiques des étudiants universitaires et les composantes des cours ont prédit des rapports d'une sensibilisation communautaire accrue de la part des étudiants. La composante de l'engagement communautaire global a contribué aux résultats rapportés par les étudiants tant sur leur sensibilisation accrue de la communauté que sur leurs compétences d'efficacité interpersonnelles. L'étude propose des pistes de recherche pour les chercheurs dévoués à l'avancement de la recherche engagée et rigoureuse, et discute des implications pour les praticiens qui cherchent à approfondir les résultats/effets de l'apprentissage-par-le-service-communautaire.

**Keywords:** service-learning; college student demographics; course characteristics; civic awareness; interpersonal skills; Egypt

**Mots-clés:** apprentissage par le service communautaire ; données démographiques des étudiants universitaires ; caractéristiques des cours ; conscience civique ; compétences interpersonnelles ; Égypte

**Introduction**

Over the last 25 years, service-learning pedagogy has steadily increased in U.S. academia. Similarly, there is a growing interest in this pedagogy in different parts of the globe (Bringle, Clayton, & Hatcher, 2013). However, studies done outside the U.S. contexts are still underdeveloped in extant research on

service-learning. The present study aimed to address this problem by focusing on service-learning in Egypt.

In addition to extending the limited research on service-learning to cover the Eastern contexts, a second purpose of this study was to fill another gap in the literature, namely how the nature of the service-learning experience may affect students' gains through this pedagogy. Much of the research on service-learning focused on its impacts on students (e.g., Eyler & Giles, 1999; Reed, Rosenberg, Statham, & Rosing, 2015), but less attention has been paid to the potential effect of course features and students' demographics, among other factors, on the outcomes expected from participating in service-learning courses (Moely & Ilustre, 2014). The present study aimed to void these gaps in extant literature by exploring the effects of personal and contextual factors on students' civic and interpersonal gains through service-learning. A brief discussion of the term "service-learning" is warranted to clarify how it is operationalized in this study.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Operation Definition***

Despite the growing interest in service-learning in higher education, there is no single agreed-upon definition for this term. Rather, existing literature features many conceptualizations, emphasizing multiple aspects of this term. Yet still, there are common characteristics among these definitions. For example, service-learning is recognized as a form of experiential learning (Ehrlich, 2000; Jacoby, 2003). Also, the connection between coursework and community service is emphasized as a distinctive feature of service-learning from volunteerism (Butin, 2010; McCarthy, 2003 Shalabi, 2012). Critical reflection is another common element in service-learning definitions that is highlighted (Green, 2003). Reciprocal and democratic relationships between university and community partners have been regarded as core to ideal service-learning programs (Marullo & Edwards, 2000; Shalabi, 2008, 2012). The variations in service-learning definitions and conceptualizations can be attributed to institutional factors such as mission, curricular offerings, and student body, as well as larger contextual factors related to the geographic location where service-learning is practised. In this study, service-learning is operationalized as a methodology that promotes intended learning goals through service to partnering communities, as articulated by the research site in this study. Sound service-learning should be a win-win situation to university and community constituents. While a comprehensive discussion of the value of this pedagogy to involved partners is beyond the scope of this work, the following section provides an overview of existing literature on students' civic and developmental gains through service-learning.

### ***Civic Outcomes***

Service-learning is mainly recommended as a means for students to learn about and take part in their local communities, and be involved in questions about social justice and different cultural norms. Eyler, Giles, Stenson, and Gray (2001) offered an overview of what had been learned about the effects of service-learning as of 2001. They presented 23 studies that linked service-learning with the development of social responsibility and citizenship skills. Likewise, past research on the impact of service-learning on students' civic learning outcomes indicated that service-learning promotes students' civility and tolerance (Barber, 1992; Battisoni, 1997; Campus Compact, 1994; Eyler & Giles, 1997; Hedin, 1989; Hepburn, 1997). Astin and Sax (1999) reported that participation in service-learning positively affects students' civic responsibility: increased commitment to serve the community, interest in influencing the political structure, and willingness to help others in difficulty.

Other research findings suggested that participation in service-learning increases students' sense of social responsibility and citizenship skills, reduces students' stereotypes, and promotes cultural and racial understanding (Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Keen & Keen, 1998; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). In formulating a research agenda for deepening understanding of civic learning through service-learning, Battistoni (2013) called for studying the nature of service-learning experience to understand the impact of the variations in these experiences on various student civic learning outcomes. The present study responds to this call by exploring the effect of service-learning course characteristics on students' civic outcomes.

### ***Personal Development***

The positive impact of service-learning on students is not limited to promoting their civic awareness and engagement. Rather, past research indicated that service-learning can foster personal growth and has a positive effect on students' personal development in various domains, including impacts on advancing interpersonal development, communication, and leadership skills (Astin et al., 1999; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Keen & Keen, 1998). Service-learning has also been found to have positive effects on students' self-efficacy, identity, moral development, and spiritual growth (Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001).

In explaining the positive personal development outcomes in service-learning, Brandenberger (2013) noted that that service-learning “engages students in several interpersonal relationships and complex social issues that have the power to challenge assumptions, stimulate critical reflection, and prompt ongoing exploration and growth” (p. 133). He further explained that the positive effects of service-learning may vary based on the diversity of personal and contextual factors inherent to the complex human relations within service-learning experiences. Accordingly, Brandenberger advised higher education professionals and community partners to focus on the individual differences and contextual factors as they plan service-learning courses. Following this advice, the present study aimed to understand the effect of students' demographics on their gains through service-learning. The next section describes the theoretical framework that guided this inquiry.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Service-learning is a form of experiential learning, which makes deliberate application of students' experiences by integrating them into the curriculum (Carver, 1997; Shalabi, 2012). Given the key role of experience in service-learning, Dewey's educational philosophy (1916, 1938) provides the theoretical basis for this research which studied the effect of students' demographics, course characteristics, and overall community engagement on civic and personal outcomes for service-learners. Dewey (1916) highlighted the significance of experience in learning, arguing that all genuine learning comes out through experience. He argued that experiential learning is essential to civic education, noting that students develop the skills required to participate in a democratic society through experiential learning. Likewise, he perceived personal development as social in nature and grounded in experience.

Dewey (1938) carefully addressed the process and quality of experience. He posited that experience involves two principles: interaction and continuity. The first principle, interaction, means that students' experiences result from interactions with their environment. In this regard, Dewey noted that students' experiences are influenced by internal factors that affect “the formation of attitudes of desire and purpose” (p. 39) and external “objective” elements associated with the environment. The second principle, continuity, means that these aspects of experiences interact

on an ongoing basis, as Dewey explained, “The conceptions of situation and of interaction are inseparable from each other. An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes . . . environment” (p. 39). Additionally, Dewey noted that every genuine experience has an active side which alters to some extent the objective conditions under which experiences happen. In this study, Dewey’s (1938) synthesis of the internal and external factors affecting students’ experiences serves as the theoretical framework for understanding the effect of students’ personal and academic background (internal elements) and the course characteristics and overall community engagement (external factors) on civic and developmental outcomes for service-learning college students. The section that follows further explains the rationale for investigating individual differences and contextual factors in service-learning courses.

### **Rationale for Clarifying the Nature of Service-Learning Courses**

As the above literature review indicates, the existing body of knowledge on service-learning abounds with studies suggesting positive personal and civic outcomes for service-learning students (Brandenberger, 2013). Yet, not all service-learning courses yield such positive outcomes. Rather, quality has been emphasized as a condition for attaining the positive outcomes suggested by engaging in service-learning experiences (Fitch, Steinke, & Hudson, 2013; Jacoby, 2003). Some scholars even went further to suggest that well-designed and well-executed service-learning is necessary for high quality research on service-learning (Bringle, Clayton, & Hatcher, 2013).

The repeated emphasis on quality service-learning has prompted attention to the nature of service-learning courses. For example, Markus (1995) called for studying both the processes and impacts of service-learning. Likewise, Brandenberger (2013) stressed the need for investigating the learning process of service-learning and incorporating assessment components, arguing that not all service-learning experiences are designed to promote developmental outcomes. In a similar vein, Bringle et al. (2013) highlighted the importance of assessing the nature of service-learning courses, arguing that a systemic examination of the conditions under which students learn in service-learning to advance the scholarship of teaching and learning centers on conducting rigorous assessment. Bringle et al. further argued that investigating the outcomes of service-learning without attending to the specific structure it takes in any given contexts is less likely to promote understanding. Recently, Moely and Ilustre (2014) highlighted the scarcity of research addressing how course characteristics may affect student outcomes from service-learning. The present study responds to the calls for investigating the nature of service-learning experience.

### **Purpose and Significance of the Study**

This quantitative study was a part of a larger mixed methods research project that aimed to explore multiple facets of service-learning partnerships at a private university in Egypt. The purpose of this study was to investigate if students’ demographics (personal and academic background); course features, and community engagement in general would predict civic and developmental outcomes from service-learning. In particular, the following research questions guided the study:

1. Do students’ demographic (personal and academic) backgrounds predict civic and developmental outcomes from service-learning?
2. Do course features predict civic and developmental outcomes from service-learning?
3. Does students’ overall community engagement predict civic and developmental outcomes from service-learning?

Analyzing whether or not students' demographics, course features, and overall community engagement are predictive of civic and interpersonal outcomes associated with service-learning would provide useful data for designing fulfilling service-learning courses that enhance civic and interpersonal skills for a diverse student body. Furthermore, the results of this research could be used in improving the teaching and learning strategies in service-learning courses. Significantly, undertaking this study in Egypt is an important step towards unveiling aspects of engaged scholarship in the Arab World which is typically marginalized and misrepresented in the literature. The discussion now turns to the study's methods.

## Research Method

### *Site*

The study was conducted at XUX University<sup>1</sup> in northern Egypt. Table 1 provides an overview of the student body in 2011 when this study was conducted. The university enrolled a total of 6,824 students in academic programs, most of whom were traditional college students whose ages ranged from 18 to 21 years old. English is the language of instruction of the research site, as is the case at other private institutions and science-based studies at public universities. The rationale for providing instruction in English is mainly to prepare students for the current competitive global market where English is arguably the most common language of communication. Moreover, English is the most common foreign language in Egypt as an enduring impact of the British occupation to the country which lasted for almost 74 years from 1882 to 1956. English is taught as a compulsory subject in all stages of public secondary education in Egypt. Also, English is widely used by Egyptians for conducting business and connecting on social media networks.

The university is popular for providing students with many extracurricular opportunities to engage with the community and develop their leadership potential. Specifically, it has a community service program that allows students to form university-based clubs to address pressing community issues. Examples of these student-led activities include Anti-Cancer Team, Student Action for Refugees Club, and Clean and Green Association Club.

**Table 1**

*Student Profile in 2011*

Academic students	Total number	6,824
Enrollment status	Undergraduate-degree students	5,244
	Graduate degree students	1,259
	Non-degree students	321
Gender	Female	53.4%
	Male	46.6%
Nationality	Egyptian	86.9%
	Other	13.1%

In 2008, the university started a service-learning program named Community-Based Learning (CBL). The former director of the program who also taught several CBL courses noted that the key elements of these courses include alignment with course goal, community empowerment, reciprocity, and reflection. The distinctive features of CBL courses align well with the common

<sup>1</sup> The name of the university was removed for confidentiality purposes.

characteristics of service-learning in the literature discussed earlier. The program offers service-learning courses through four schools: Business, Humanities and Social Sciences, Global Affairs and Public Policy, and Sciences and Engineering. It collaborates with various community partners, most of whom are not-for-profit organizations with several missions including promoting good manners through art-based activities and supporting refugees. “Writing for Publications” and “Grant Writing” are two popular CBL courses in which students partner with nonprofits to help develop funding proposals to support community-based projects and raise awareness of refugees’ plights. As revealed in the qualitative data, students engaged with partnering organizations in a host of activities, including documenting stories of African refugees’ daily life in Cairo, writing grant proposals, mentoring children with intellectual and motor disabilities, making profiles for nonprofits, participating in fundraising campaigns, and painting beds in hospitals.

XUX was chosen as a research site for this study for several reasons. First, the concept of combining coursework with community service is a common practice in this university. Unlike other universities in Egypt that encourage community service through extracurricular activities and student-based associations, XUX has an established service-learning program that integrates community service through curricular offerings, albeit the early stage of the program. Additionally, XUX takes initiatives to raise awareness of this pedagogy and disseminate information about civic engagement in the Arab World through scholarly activities including conferences and publications.

Second, this university is typical of current realities in higher education in Egypt. Specifically, the fast-growing population has constituted a huge burden on the already crowded public universities in Egypt. With the declining capacity of public institutions of higher education to accommodate incoming generations from secondary education, the government has encouraged investment in private higher education. In response to the increasing demand on higher education within relatively limited number of public universities, a significant number of private universities were established to satisfy this national need and compensate for the diminished capacity and resources of public institutions of higher education. As per statistics provided by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MHESR), there are currently 23 private universities comparing with 24 public universities. In the 2014/2015 academic year, total students enrollment was 5,627 at the research site and 105,785 students at the 22 other private universities. These numbers indicate that the research site, similar to other private universities in Egypt, voids an important gap by providing access to higher education to many Egyptian youths. In general, enrollment in private universities has become a common trend among Egyptian youths. Although tuition is typically higher at private universities, MHESR in collaboration with these universities regularize full scholarships to facilitate enrollment for students from less privileged economic backgrounds.

Third, in addition to the commonalities between the research site and other universities in Egypt, the researcher was attracted to this university because of the interesting nature of its student body. For example, the university is known for enrolling mainly affluent students who can afford its high tuition. However, recently XUX started to offer merit-based full scholarships for students from economically challenging backgrounds. The author treasured the unique opportunity to capture the voices of both privileged students who are less inclined towards community service and those who are likely to be involved with community issues on a personal level. Also, despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of the student body at this university is Egyptian as shown on Table 1, there are still a number of students from other countries enrolled at the university. The author speculated that the interaction between domestic and international students might generate interesting dynamics that influence community engagement on campus. Lastly, the author thought

that her familiarity with XUX based on her prior studying and teaching experiences there would facilitate her access into the research site. The issue of access was especially critical because of the unstable conditions in Egypt at the time of data collection.

Data were gathered in the Spring semester shortly after the Egyptian Revolution on January 25, 2011. During that time, the country was in a state of political unrest, making things unclear and unpredictable. The revolution was empowering to many Egyptians and others around the world. Yet, the unstable conditions during that time posed some issues to the CBL Program. For example, the Spring semester started two weeks late, but ended as scheduled, putting pressure on students to finish their community service work in a condensed period. Additionally, as revealed in the qualitative data, the university was concerned about students' safety during that time. Thus, students were advised to be careful when working with community agencies, especially the ones located in the downtown area, and be accompanied by security personnel.

### ***Participants and Sampling Strategy***

The target population was students at XUX University who had taken service-learning courses mainly during the term of data collection. Convenience sampling was used in this study in which 61 traditional college students completed survey questionnaires in the end of Spring semester of 2011. Detailed demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in the subsequent section.

### ***Sample Characteristics***

As shown in Table 2, valid item responses account for forty-seven (77.0%) female students and thirteen (21.3%) male students. Participants' ages ranged between 18 and 29 years ( $M = 21.24$ ,  $SD = 2.143$ ). For race/ethnicity, fifty-four (88.5%) were Arabs and six (9.8%) were from other racial backgrounds. Forty-six (75.4%) were undergraduates and fourteen (23.0%) were graduates. Twenty-nine (47.5%) reported having a grade point average (GPA) of 3.5–4.0, twenty-four (39.3%) reported a GPA of 3.0–3.5, six (9.8%) reported a GPA of 2.5–3.0, and one reported a GPA of 1.5–2.0. These frequencies show that students who are enrolled in service-learning courses tend to be in a good academic standing.

The sample characteristics are consistent with the demographics of the student body at XUX University. Of particular relevance, Egyptian students constitute the overwhelming number of students at the university. Likewise, the percentage of female students is higher than that of male students. Also, the university enrolls a considerably higher number of undergraduate students than graduate students.

### ***Data Sources***

As indicated above, the present empirical study is part of a larger research in which the author studied multiple areas of service-learning using the methodology of mixed methods research. Creswell (2015) noted that this type of research tends to be long because of the space needed for describing both the quantitative and qualitative components of the study, the procedures of reporting data and the analysis of each strand, as well as the explanation of the integration strategy for both methods. The large scale of mixed methods research studies poses problems since most scholarly outlets put restriction on submission length. Creswell and several methodologists such as Stange, Crabtree, and Miller (2006) addressed this issue and put forward guidelines for publishing multi-method studies. For example, Creswell advised mixed methods researchers to consider generating three written submissions from a single study, suggesting the following sequence: "a quantitative article, a qualitative article, and an overall mixed methods article" (p. 92). With these guidelines in mind, this study reports the quantitative element of the larger mixed methods research.



The qualitative component will be followed in a future article to promote understanding of the quantitative results and portray a richer and more complete picture of students' experiences with the community through service-learning.

**Table 2**  
**Students' Demographics Characteristics**

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	47	77.0%
Male	13	21.0%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
Arabs	54	88.5%
Other	6	9.8%
<b>Religious orientation</b>		
Religious	38	62.3%
Spiritual but not religious	9	14.8%
None	7	11.5%
Very religious	3	4.9%
Other	1	1.6%
<b>Major</b>		
Arts	23	37.7%
Business	22	36.1%
Hard Sciences	11	18.0%
<b>Class level</b>		
Undergraduate	46	75.4%
Graduate	14	23.0%
<b>Grade point average (GPA)</b>		
3.4–4.0	29	47.5%
3.0–3.5	24	39.3%
2.5–3.0	6	9.8%
1.5–2.0	1	1.6%

Note: n = 56–61 due to missing item responses

### ***Data Collection***

Data for this quantitative study was collected via an online survey. Electronic surveys are efficient because responses can be received quickly. They are also cost effective because no postage or fees are required. Additionally, they increase accuracy in recording responses because data entry errors can be eliminated by automatically building responses into a database (Lazar & Preece, 2001). A collective message that explains the purpose of the study with the embedded link to the survey was emailed to all faculty members who have taught service-learning courses. These faculty members were identified based on a list provided by the Service-Learning Office at the university. In this message, faculty members were requested to post the link of the survey on the online environment of their respective service-learning courses. To increase the response rate to the survey, faculty

members who taught service-learning courses in previous years were also asked to email the link of the survey to their students. Paper copies of the survey were distributed among students who did not complete the electronic version of the survey. Three weekly reminders and thank-you notes were sent to each faculty member.

### ***Measures: Independent Variables***

#### ***Students' Demographics (Personal and Academic Backgrounds)***

Participants were asked to answer general questions about themselves by marking the choice that best applies to them. The items fell into two clusters constituting these indicators. The items asking about students' demographics included three questions about gender, racial identity, and religious orientation. The items asking about students' academic backgrounds included three questions about major area of study, class level, and GPA. These variables were studied in previous research but resulting in mixed findings. For example, some studies found that race affects individuals' community involvement (Mattis, Jagers, Hatcha, Lawhon, Murphy, & Murray, 2000; Wilson & Musick, 1997). A recent study found significant differences between ethnic groups across multiple learning outcomes through service-learning (Geringer, Canton, Stratemeger, & Rice, 2013). Other studies, however, did not detect a statistically significant difference based on race when addressing levels of volunteerism. The literature supports the view that gender plays a significant role in service-learning participation and in attitudes of participants (Geringer et al., 2013; Wymer, 2008). However, some studies found that gender, among other demographics, did not matter for service-learning outcomes (Bowman, Brandenberger, Mick, & Smedley, 2010). In the aspect of the demographic of student academic major in relation to service-learning which was also examined, one study indicated that academic major was the only significant variable related to student choice of a service option, with social sciences students being more likely to choose service-learning courses than students from other major areas of study (Ender, Martin, Cotter, Kowalewski, & Defiore, 2000). Other studies found that academic major had an impact on service-learning performance (Geringer et al., 2013; Rocha, 2000). Still other studies did not detect a statistically significant relationship between student academic major and their civic attitudes (Seider, Gillmor, & Rabinowicz, 2011). Class level was analyzed as well in prior research with evidence that mature students—who are likely to attend graduate programs—exhibit the greatest enthusiasm for participating in service-learning and its related outcomes (Geringer et al., 2013). Given that religion has a major influence in Egyptian culture and was examined in prior research (e.g., Mattis et al., 2000), it was also deemed valuable and included in this composite.

#### ***Course Features***

Participants were asked to answer four questions about their experiences with respect to the number of service-learning courses taken, the number of hours spent at community-based organizations per week, the department offering the course, and the semester in which the course was offered. Students were provided with several choices and asked to mark the choice that best describes their experiences. Prior research has addressed the number of service-learning courses taken and hours spent at community-based organizations in relation to quality service-learning programs with evidence for the significant impact of these variables (Kendrick, 1996; Mabry, 1998; Markus, Howard, & King, 1993). Given the concurrency between the Egyptian Revolution of January 2011 and the time of data collection, the author also wanted to explore the effect of the semester. As well, having in mind the discussion of the literature on the role faculty champions play in service-learning, the department was included among the variables constituting the course characteristics

especially because the director of the Service-Learning Program was a faculty member in the Department of Rhetoric where a substantial number of service-learning courses were offered.

### *Overall Community Engagement*

For this indicator, participants were asked to respond to three closed-ended questions about their community involvement experiences at the university other than service-learning courses. In particular, the first question asked students to estimate the number of courses that they have taken at their institution with a community component other than service-learning courses. The second question asked them to indicate how often they have been involved in the community as part of their university experience *outside* the classroom. The third question asked them to indicate how often they have been involved in the community, *both inside and outside* the classroom, as part of their experiences at XUX. Because the university where data was collected was famous for providing students with ample opportunities to engage in the community through extracurricular activities, the author hypothesized that this composite could affect students' service-learning experiences.

### ***Measures: Dependent Variables***

#### *Civic and Developmental Outcomes From Participating in Service-Learning Courses*

Participants were asked to respond to items on two constructs: Community awareness and interpersonal effectiveness skills (Moely, Furco, & Reed, 2008) to indicate what they might have learned from their service-learning course experiences. Each of the scale is a multiple-item measure of only one construct. The community awareness scale, which includes 10 items, measures awareness of community issues. Examples of these items are "applied things I learned in my service-learning activity to my college course" and "become more aware of the community of which I am a part." The interpersonal effectiveness scale, which includes seven items, measures interpersonal qualities, such as the ability to interact with others and leadership skills. Examples of these items are "learned how to work with other effectively" and "practiced my ability to lead and make decisions." The two scales included five-point Likert-like items for which respondents indicate their agreement or disagreement on a scale of 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree."

### ***Validity and Reliability***

The author obtained empirical content validation for the survey instrument from six senior scholars in the field of service-learning and community engagement. She conducted three cognitive interviews with three individuals from different demographic and disciplinary backgrounds. A small pilot study was conducted in which the online version of the instrument was administered to a number of scholars and common individuals. The survey questionnaire was refined based on feedback obtained through these efforts. Together, these efforts enhanced the validity and quality of the instrument. The names of the scales employed were not specified in the survey questionnaire and the items of the two scales were mixed and arranged in a random order to minimize the effect of social desirability on student responses.

Cronbach's coefficient alpha is the estimate of reliability that considers the number of items on a scale and the degree to which these items are correlated with each other (Cronbach, 1951). According to Nunnally (1967), reliability coefficients above .80 are considered acceptable, reliability coefficients in the .70 are considered marginally acceptable, and reliability coefficients less than .70 are considered suspect and will miscalculate the true relationship between two variables. The internal consistency of the community awareness scale was .92,  $N = 1,626$ . The internal consistency of the interpersonal effectiveness scale was .89,  $N = 1,622$  (Moely et al., 2008). Table

3 provides the reliabilities of the scales in this study and the ones that were reported by the developers of the scales. While lower than those reported in the development study, internal consistency reliabilities were adequate in the present study.

**Table 3**  
**Reliabilities of Scales**

Scale	Alpha in Moely et al. (2008) Study	Alpha current study
Community awareness	.92 n = 1,626	.89 n = 61
Interpersonal effectiveness	.89 n = 1,622	.85 n = 61

### ***Service-Learning Course***

As shown in Table 4, fifty-one (83.6%) took one or two service-learning courses, nine (14.8%) took three or four service-learning courses, and one (1.6%) took five or more service-learning courses. This characteristic shows that the vast majority of the students took only one or two service-learning courses. These frequencies can be attributed to the relatively young age of the service-learning program at the university and the obstacles facing it. A discussion of these obstacles is beyond the scope of this paper.

**Table 4**  
**Service-Learning Course Features**

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Semester</b>		
Spring 2011	36	59.0%
Previous semesters	23	37.7%
<b>Department offering service-learning courses</b>		
Rhetoric	27	44.3%
Others	32	52.5%
<b>Number of service-learning courses</b>		
1–2	51	83.6%
3–4	9	14.8%
≥ 5	1	1.6%
<b>Number of hours spent at service sites per week</b>		
1–5 hours	47	77.0%
5–10 hours	10	16.4%
10–15 hours	3	4.9%
15–20 hours	1	1.6%

Note: n = 59–61 due to missing item responses

Valid item responses show that thirty-six (59.0%) of the participants took service-learning courses in the spring of 2011 and twenty-three (37.7%) took service-learning courses in previous semesters. These frequencies reveal that the number of survey respondents who took service-learning courses in the spring of 2011 is considerably higher than that of those who enrolled in service-learning courses in earlier semesters. Based on advice from the program administration, the study mainly targeted students who were enrolled in service-learning courses in the spring of 2011. As such,

these frequencies reflect the participants to whom the survey was mainly administered. Twenty-seven (44.3%) of the participants took service-learning courses in the Department of Rhetoric and thirty-two (52.5%) took service-learning courses in departments other than Rhetoric. Forty-seven (77.0%) reported having worked one to five hours at their respective community-based organizations per week, ten (16.4%) reported five to ten hours, three (4.9%) reported ten to fifteen hours and one (1.6%) reported fifteen to twenty hours. This sample characteristic reveals that the vast majority of students spent short periods of time at their community-based organizations, only one to five hours per week.

### ***Students' Overall Community Engagement***

As Table 5 shows, thirty-two (52.5%) of the participants reported that they did not enroll in courses with a community component other than their service-learning course(s), twenty-six (42.6%) reported that they had enrolled in one or two courses, and three (4.9%) reported that they had enrolled in three to four courses. These frequencies indicate that XUX University offers a number of courses other than the service-learning courses that incorporate a community component. In response to a question about the frequency students have participated in a community activity as part of their student experience at XUX, thirteen (21.3%) reported "never." The exact percentage was true for those students who have participated "once each academic year," "once or twice each semester," and "nearly every week." Nine (14.8%) reported having participated in a community activity as part of their student experience at XUX University "about once a month." Given the prevalence of student-run clubs that address community issues, the frequencies of student engagement in community activities as part of their extracurricular experiences are lower than expected.

**Table 5**  
**Students' Overall Community Engagement**

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Community engagement courses other than service-learning</b>		
Zero courses	32	52.5%
1-2 courses	26	42.6%
3-4 courses	3	4.9%
<b>Extracurricular community-based activities</b>		
Never	13	21.3%
Once each academic year	13	21.3%
Once or twice each semester	13	21.3%
Nearly every week	13	21.3%
About once a month	9	14.8%
<b>Summary of community-based activities (both inside and outside the classroom)</b>		
Seldom	25	41.0%
Sometimes	14	23.0%
Always	11	18.0%
Often	8	13.1%
Never	3	4.9%

In response to a question about the extent of their overall participation in community activities at XUX University, both inside and outside the classroom, twenty-five (41.0%) reported that they seldom (one to two times per semester) participated, fourteen (23.0%) reported that they sometimes (once a month) participated, eleven (18.0%) reported that they always (each week) participated, eight (13.1%) reported that they often (two to three times a month) participated, and three (4.9%) reported that they “never” participated in such activities. These frequencies may indicate that XUX University tends to engage students in community activities through both curricular and extracurricular activities. The study’s results are presented in the following section.

## **Analysis and Results**

The research questions guiding this study addressed whether or not students’ demographics (personal and academic backgrounds), course feature, and overall community engagement might predict their self-report of gains from service-learning courses, namely becoming aware of the community and enhanced interpersonal effectiveness skills. To address the first question, a standard multiple regression was conducted to evaluate how well student demographics predicted their civic awareness and interpersonal effectiveness outcomes. The linear combination of gender, religious major, and GPA was significantly related to community awareness,  $F(6, 48) = 2.36, p < 0.05$ . The multiple correlation coefficient  $r$  was .48, indicating that approximately 23% of the variance of community awareness can be accounted for by the linear combination of gender, religious major, and GPA. The demographic composite was not important for the interpersonal effectiveness outcome.

With regard to the second question, a standard multiple regression was conducted to examine if course features predicted student civic awareness and interpersonal effectiveness outcomes through service-learning. Similar to the results of the first question, the linear combination of the semester when students took service-learning courses, the department offering the course, the number of service-learning courses, and the number of hours students spent at their community-based agencies per week was significantly related to community awareness,  $F(4, 52) = 6.42, p < 0.001$ . The multiple correlation coefficient  $r$  was .58, indicating that approximately 34% of the variance of community awareness can be accounted for by the linear combination of variables constituting the course feature composite. Again, this composite was less important for the interpersonal effectiveness outcomes.

As for the third question, a standard multiple regression was conducted to examine if student engagement in the community in general predicted their civic awareness and interpersonal effectiveness outcomes through service-learning. The linear combination of the number of courses taken with a community component other than service-learning, the frequency student participation in extracurricular activities with a community element, and their overall engagement in the community both inside and outside the class was significantly related to community awareness,  $F(3, 57) = 3.95, p < 0.05$ . The multiple correlation coefficient  $r$  was .46, indicating that approximately 21% of the variance of community awareness can be accounted for by the linear combination of the variables constituting the student overall community engagement composite. This composite was also important for the interpersonal effectiveness variable,  $F(3, 57) = 5.75, p < 0.001$ . The multiple correlation coefficient  $r$  was .48, indicating that approximately 23% of the variance of the interpersonal effectiveness variable can be accounted for by the linear combination of the variables constituting. Table 6 summarizes results for the two outcomes: Community awareness and interpersonal effectiveness.

**Table 6**  
**Regression Analyses Predicting Community Awareness and Interpersonal Effectiveness**  
**from Student Backgrounds, Service-Learning Course Features, and Overall Community**  
**Engagement**

Outcomes	Community awareness				Interpersonal effectiveness		
Predictors	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	$\beta$		b	<i>SE b</i>	$\beta$
Student demographic characteristics							
Gender	-2.82	2.02	-.21		-.62	1.65	-.06
Race/Ethnicity	-1.47	2.66	-.08		1.66	2.17	.12
Religious orientation	-1.58	1.05	-.24		-.57	.86	-.12
Major	.15	1.06	.02		-.1.29	.86	-.23
Class level	.97	.82	.17		-.12	1.54	-.01
Grade point average (GPA)	-.10		-.14		.27	.83	.05
Service-learning course features							
Department	3.06	1.45	.28*		20.30	2.78	.07
Semester	3.49	1.47	.34*		1.10	1.31	.230
Number of SL courses	3.05	1.46	.24*		2.42	1.32	.24
Number of hours spent at service sites per week	.72	.95	.09		1.03	.79	.16
Overall community engagement							
Courses other than service-learning with a community engagement component	-1.26	1.27	-.13		-.86	.90	-.11
Extracurricular community-based activities	-1.74	.68	-.43*		-1.22	.49	-.41*
Summary of community-based activities (both inside and outside the classroom)	2.97	.85	.61**		2.44	.60	.71**
<i>Notes:</i> Student demographic variables predicted community awareness: $F(6, 48) = 2.36, p < 0.05$ . Service-learning course features variables predicted community awareness: $F(4, 52) = 6.41, p < 0.001$ . Overall community engagement variables predicted community awareness and interpersonal effectiveness: For community awareness, $F(3, 57) = 3.95, p < 0.05$ . For interpersonal effectiveness, step 3 prediction was significant, $F(3, 57) = 5.75, p < 0.01$ . Statistical significance of variables contributing to these predictions is indicated in the table as follows: * $p < 0.05$ ; ** $p < 0.001$							

## Discussion

Past research on service-learning focused largely on examining its effect on college students participating in this pedagogy (e.g., Eyler & Giles, 1999; Moely, Mercer, Ilustre, Miron, & McFarland, 2002). As the field matures, several scholars called for understanding the impact of variations in course characteristics and differences among students on personal and civic outcomes through service-learning (Battistoni, 2013; Brandenberger, 2013; Moely & Ilustre, 2014). In this regard, Kiely (2005) argued that “it is crucial that researchers discover and explain more holistically the underlying pedagogical and contextual mechanisms that make service-learning a distinctly transformative educational enterprise” (p. 22). In response to these calls, this study attempted to identify the variables related to students’ demographics, course characteristics, and overall community experiences that may predict positive students’ outcomes particularly in enhanced community awareness and interpersonal effectiveness skills.

The results indicated that the combination of certain demographic characteristics including gender, race, academic major, and class level is a significant predictor of student civic learning outcomes through service-learning. Similar to these results, outcomes of prior research indicated important impacts of demographic variables. For example, Eyler and Giles (1999) reported gender effects in that women were more likely to gain from service-learning than men. Similarly, a more recent study on the effects of student demographics on their gains through service-learning in marketing showed that student diversity affects their service-learning experiences, highlighting the impact of ethnic background, academic major, age, with a marginal effect of gender (Geringer et al., 2013). However, Bowman, Brandenberger, Mick, and Smedley (2010) found that students’ gains from service-learning were generally unrelated to their demographic characteristics, including race/ethnicity, gender, or family income. The mixed results concerning students’ demographics in relation to their gains from service-learning invites additional research to better illuminate this area. Outcomes of such research could be used in designing service-learning courses that are attractive and fulfilling to a wider range of college students.

This study’s results also showed that the combination of specific course features—semester when students took service-learning courses, the department offering the course, the number of service-learning courses, and the number of hours students spent at their community-based agencies per week—was a significant predictor for the community awareness outcome. The effect of the semester may be a product of the fact that the Spring semester of 2011 witnessed the ramifications of the Egyptian Revolution of January 2011. The rabid and intense political events at that time, as compared to more politically stable periods in earlier semesters, might have affected students’ awareness of their community through service-learning in this semester. This result stimulates future research to focus on exploring the effect of political turmoil on student attitudes towards participation in service-learning and how uprisings and other unstable conditions may shape service-learning and students’ involvement in community service in general. The need of such research is critical and timely given people’s increasing struggle for social justice which likely leads to political unrest in several geographic locations, especially in the Arab World at the present time.

The effect of the department might be attributed to the fact that the Service-Learning Program director was a faculty member in the Department of Rhetoric that offered a significant number of service-learning courses. Therefore, she might have promoted the number and quality of service-learning courses in her department. Focusing future research on exploring the role of faculty champions in promoting service-learning in their departments in particular and on campus in general would provide useful data that may be used for intentional preparation of future



generations of engagement scholars and ensuring the sustainability of service-learning on university campuses.

The impact of the number of service-learning courses indicate that the more service-learning courses students take, the more opportunities they are afforded to learn about others. In line with these results, Bowman et al., (2010) found that students who had taken previous service-learning courses had significantly greater gains on three outcome measures— responsibility for improving society, openness to diversity, and empowerment view of helping— than students who were taking their first courses. Likewise, Spring, Dietz, and Grimm (2005) reported a correlation between the number and type of quality service-learning experiences and students' outcomes in the areas of civic engagement in K–12 settings. These results suggest that the accumulation of service-learning courses is important in increasing students' learning about their community. This may be the case because students' first experience may stimulate their interest in the community, thus motivating them to take more courses in which they learn more about their society. University officials wanting to enlarge student gains from service-learning could benefit from these findings by increasing and diversifying offered courses integrating this pedagogy, thus encouraging a wide range of students to enrolling in additional service-learning courses.

As shown in Table 6, the value of  $\beta$  shown for the number of hours spent at community-based organizations was not statistically significant. Yet, this result should be interpreted with the sample frequencies in mind, namely the vast majority of students—forty-seven (77.0%)—reported having worked only one to five hours at their respective community-based organizations per week with much fewer numbers spending more than five hours at the service site. As such, these small numbers might have hindered detecting a statistically significant effect of this variable by its own. Indeed, the author argues that allowing students sufficient time to spend in the community is important in promoting their community awareness. Affording students opportunities for quality interactions with others in the community is especially critical for affluent students—as is the case with most participants in this research—who typically live in their own bubbles and have few to no opportunities to interact with disadvantaged populations in their society. In line with this proposition, prior research detected a positive relationship between the amount of time students spend conducting community service and their civic values. For example, Kendrick (1996) and Markus, Howard, and King (1993) suggested that students who spend at least 20 hours during a semester attain greater awareness of social problems and more positive attitudes towards community involvement. In a similar vein, Mabry (1998) did not find statistically significant differences in post course personal values and civic attitudes between groups spending different numbers of community service hours. Yet, she detected a statistically significant positive change in civic attitudes within the group that conducted fifteen to nineteen service hours. Additionally, she reported that service-learning students who spent fewer than 14 hours conducting community service perceived significantly less academic gains than other students. In K–12 schools, Billig and Broderson (2007) found that the duration of service-learning activities was positively related to valuing school, civic engagement, social responsibility, and locus of control.

The findings indicated that the overall community engagement composite was a significant predictor for both outcomes: students' reports of enhanced community awareness and interpersonal effectiveness skills. Two variables—the frequency of participation in the community through extracurricular activities and the combination of activities both inside and outside the classroom—in this composite made significant contributions to both outcomes. These significant results suggest that students' involvement in the community through extracurricular activities helps deepen their civic and developmental gains through service-learning. This finding sends a powerful message,

namely enhancing students' civic mindedness and interpersonal effectiveness is a shared responsibility between all units on university campuses through both curricular and extracurricular offerings. Capitalizing on extracurricular activities to increase students' critical awareness of the community and advance their interpersonal effectiveness skills is especially important for universities existing in cultural contexts that are less familiar with integrating community service in academic coursework, as is the case in Egypt where this study was done. In such cultural settings, engaging students in their communities outside the classroom through student clubs and other university-based activities is the foremost step that would help students and their families become familiar with this concept, and thus better receive the pedagogy of service-learning.

The sample characteristics provide a plausible explanation as to why the third variable, number of courses with community components other than service-learning, was not a statistically significant predictor for either of the outcomes. A closer look at Table 5 reveals that the majority of the participants (52.5%) reported that they did not enroll in courses with a community component other than their service-learning course. A fewer number, twenty-six (42.6%) reported that they had enrolled in one or two courses while only three students (4.9%) reported that they had enrolled in three to four courses. As such, the few number of cases might be the reason why this variable did not yield statistical significance.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the consistency of this study's results with those of prior research, these results should be considered with some limitations in mind. As stated previously, convenience sampling was used in this study, and so the response rate cannot be calculated. Also, the sample was relatively small and drawn from one university. These issues imposed a limitation on understanding how generalizable the results are. Additionally, the sample was diverse yet the numbers composing this diversity was small, thus constraining statistically significant results, as discussed earlier. The small number of cases is justified in light of the relatively young age of the service-learning initiative at the research site. Therefore, future research with bigger and diverse samples is necessary to deepen our understanding of the factors affecting students' gains from service-learning.

Another limitation to take into account is the independent variables in the three composites employed in this study. Specifically, there are a host of other variables that could be added to each of these composites. For example, in the student demographics composite, other important variables, such as students' socioeconomic status, political affiliation, and attitude towards voting, could be included in addition to the variables used. Likewise, the course features composite may be influenced by additional variables, such as course materials, connection of the service activities with course goals, and frequency and nature of reflection, as well as other factors in the service sites, including the type and nature of student interaction with agency staff during their service, and the type of populations with whom students worked. Similarly, additional variables may be included in the overall community engagement composite, such as the type and nature of activities students do at the service sites. Therefore, it would be a worthwhile endeavour for future research to use the variables suggested by the author and perhaps to generate additional factors that may intertwine with the variables investigated in this study to broaden our understanding of the potential influence of the factors influencing student outcomes through service-learning.

Despite these limitations, this study adds to the small extant body of literature investigating the factors that facilitate civic and personal growth for college students through service-learning (Bowman et al., 2010; Kendrick, 1996; Mabry, 1998; Markus et al., 1993; Moely & Ilustre, 2014).

In this regard, it presents two important contributions. First, the results of this study support prior research in terms of the positive effect of aspects of course characteristics on increasing students' gains from service-learning. Second, this study breaks new ground by introducing extracurricular activities as predictors for students' civic and developmental outcomes from service-learning. The current study suggested that engaging students in community service activities beyond service-learning affects their interpersonal and civic gains from service-learning. This is a fruitful area for future research. Outcomes in this regard could provide directions for the strategic planning of student co-curricular and extracurricular activities in a way that maximizes the value of these activities to students. Moreover, this study is an important contribution to the relatively small body of research on engaged scholarship in non-US contexts (e.g., Hatcher & Erasmus, 2008; Shalabi, 2013). By undertaking this research in Egypt, the present study increases knowledge base on service-learning in Eastern contexts, especially in the Arab World that is going through unprecedented changes. Additional studies in international settings are critically needed. The accumulation of this type of research could allow interested scholars to undertake comparative studies, promoting our understanding of how service-learning may be affected by cultural contexts.

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